

CIACO NID 81 [REDACTED]

December 31, 1981

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POLAND: Government Gestures

While trying to impose order in the country's economic enterprises, the regime has made some conciliatory gestures in order to alleviate popular unhappiness with martial law. Soviet commentary continues to portray the situation in Poland as calm, while again evincing concern that the role of the Polish military not appear to have eclipsed that of the Communist Party. [REDACTED]

The government's fear of new problems is causing it to move cautiously in returning workers to enterprises where militancy has been strongest. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the authorities will not call workers back to the Piast mine in Silesia until after the first of the year and will conduct a staged recall of workers to a major shipyard in Szczecin. Officials in Szczecin reportedly are also concerned about rumored plans to organize a strike in the province some time in early January. [REDACTED]

Shorter Workweek Reinstated

In an effort to erode worker resistance, the government announced yesterday that beginning in the "new year" it will restore the shorter workweek in factories that have not been militarized. The government did not reveal its plans for working hours in the militarized sectors, which probably include railroad, transport, communications, coal, petroleum and power industries, and major steel mills. [REDACTED]

The shorter workweek was an important concession won by Solidarity last February and was revoked by the martial law regime two weeks ago. The move itself is unlikely to gain the regime much immediate support--if only because it does not apply to enterprises where militancy probably is strongest. It will, however, be seen by some Poles as a hopeful sign that the regime will make good on its reform promises. [REDACTED]

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To buttress further its claims that it intends to pursue a moderate course, the regime also announced yesterday that it had released 19 Solidarity activists, the first such publicized action by martial law authorities. It also reported its intention to ask parliament to establish a "state tribunal" apparently to hear charges against former party leader Gierek and other high-level officials arrested when martial law was imposed. The authorities know that there is strong sentiment for public trials of former officials, and they probably hope that setting up the tribunal will gain public approval. [REDACTED]

The government, however, is continuing to show a tough attitude toward Solidarity activists who have tried to organize strikes. It announced yesterday more stiff jail sentences for a number of offenders. [REDACTED]

Economic Planning

Meanwhile, a Polish bank official has indicated that the regime will go ahead with economic reform plans to base foreign trade more on profitability rather than on the preferences of central planners. The government will devalue the zloty on 1 January--the new rate will be 80 zlotys to the dollar, more than double the current rate--to allow economic managers to determine better which goods can be profitably exported or imported. Although the change will not have much effect initially on Polish trade, the government hopes that it will eventually help concentrate production for export on those goods with the highest return. [REDACTED]

Despite these moves, the regime may still be working out its overall economic and political game plan. According to unconfirmed reports [REDACTED] Premier Jaruzelski has set up three competing groups to draft programs of social, economic, and political reforms. A government official told Western reporters yesterday that Jaruzelski will unveil his program in early January. Some indications of his intentions could come, however, in the traditional New Year's address to the nation, which might be broadcast tonight. [REDACTED]

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Whatever is in Jaruzelski's plan, there is little expectation among Polish officials that martial law will end soon. Several officials told [REDACTED] that they expect it to last at least several months. The government's announcement yesterday that local elections scheduled for February will be postponed gives credence to their belief. One official believes there will continue to be a gradual easing of restrictions, and he added that internal communications might be restored some time in January because the cutoff is seriously hindering enterprises. [REDACTED]

The government yesterday announced the easing of more restrictions, including a temporary lifting of the curfew for tonight, resumption of ferry services to several Scandinavian countries, and the opening of classes for some university students on 8 January. [REDACTED]

Soviet Comments

A TASS report from Warsaw claimed that the situation in Poland remains "calm and well-ordered" and that work is becoming "especially" well coordinated at Poland's largest plants, including the Katowice iron and steel works. TASS also cited Polish reports that coal production is rising. [REDACTED]

Meanwhile, Soviet television last night quoted a statement attributed to Polish Government spokesmen that reaffirmed the leading role of the Communist Party under martial law. Moscow's continuing attention to this issue suggests deep concern over the ideological questions raised by the military takeover in Poland, and over the likelihood that it will take some time to correct the disarray within the party. Moscow has not reported the decision to postpone a session of the party Central Committee originally slated to be held next week. [REDACTED]

There has been no significant change in the military situation in and around Poland. [REDACTED]